

Appendix J: Public Outreach and Comments on the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

INTRODUCTION

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the Houston-Galveston Area Council's (H-GAC's) long-range planning document. The Plan has a 28-year horizon and specifies investment strategies for maintaining, managing and improving the surface transportation network in the eight-county Houston region. The Plan describes how the region will spend nearly \$130 billion in transportation funding from local, regional, state and federal sources between now and 2035.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Development of the 2035 RTP began with a public outreach initiative launched in 2005 called Envision Houston Region. H-GAC launched the *Envision Houston Region* initiative to facilitate citizen involvement in the process of analyzing how future population growth could affect land use and transportation plans across the region and to identify innovative approaches to meet transportation challenges associated with rapid growth.

Envision Houston Region Initiative

With more than a million new people arriving in the Houston-Galveston area every decade, planning ahead for the region's transportation system remains paramount. H-GAC, in partnership with several organizations, hosted a series of five *Envision Houston Region* workshops throughout the region in September and October 2005. The purpose of the *Envision Houston Region* initiative and its workshops and public involvement was to create a regional "vision" for the future growth of the eight-county area.

The nationally recognized visioning expert, John Fregonese of Fregonese Calthorpe Associates, a professional land-use planning firm, was selected to lead the project. The firm was responsible for similar successful projects throughout the United States, including Austin, Dallas, Salt Lake City, Portland, Los Angeles, and Denver.

Project workshops were sponsored by an alliance of organizations, including H-GAC, Blueprint Houston, Center for Houston's Future, ULI Houston, American Institute of Architects (AIA), the City of Baytown, Economic Development Alliance for Brazoria County, North Houston Association, and West Houston Association. The workshops and meetings were heavily promoted through paid advertising and public and media relations efforts by H-GAC and its stakeholders.



The workshops were free and open to the public. Community leaders, residents, elected officials, local planning officials, and others were invited to participate in these “hands-on” exercises to map out alternatives for how the our region could grow. They mapped alternative ‘visions’ of a livable region by identifying where people will work, live and travel from place to place.

As a first step in the 2035 RTP planning process, the *Envision Houston Region* initiative gave area stakeholders and citizens an opportunity to:

- become more informed about population forecasts, development principles and density options for accommodating new growth in households and jobs,
- evaluate growth alternatives and express a collective vision of the future growth and development of the region, and
- make their voices heard in the public dialogue about transportation and infrastructure investments that will affect the region’s quality of life.

Several hundred community leaders, residents, and elected officials from all across the region participated in this unique opportunity to learn about long-term growth and get involved in the process.

The fall workshops were followed by four community forums held in May 2006 that focused on the implications for counties and municipalities of alternative growth scenarios. The objective of the spring community forums was to discuss the merits of each scenario in the context of community goals and values. Expert panels comprised of scientists, elected officials, land developers, lawyers, economists and planners discussed the growth scenarios in terms of political, economic and social factors. The panelists explored the implications for mobility, the environment and the quality of life of the residents in each area. Lively question and answer sessions with the audience followed the panel discussions.

Public participation in the workshops and forums resulted in the development of a set of community values, including an emphasis on parks and other green space and transit-oriented development with jobs and housing closer together. These community values are reflected in the metropolitan planning process in the goals for the 2035 RTP and in the selection and prioritization of projects in the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Maps, photos, and results can be found at www.envisionhoustonregion.org.

Envision Houston Region Public Outreach Efforts 2005-2006

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location/ Attendance	Type of Effort / Topic	Ad Published / Other Publicity
8/26/05	H-GAC Attendees: 30	Envision Houston Region Workshop for Elected Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • EHR website/ H-GAC website •
9/17/05	CENTRAL: University of Houston Hilton Hotel, Houston Attendees: 400	Envision Houston Region Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle and This Week sections • Houston Business Journal • African American News & Issues • La Voz de Houston • Email • Media Alert
9/30/05	NORTH: Lone Star Convention and Expo Center, Conroe Attendees: 90	Envision Houston Region Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle (3) and This Week sections • Conroe Courier (3) • Conroe Courier Plus (3) • Lake Conroe Plus (3) • Woodlands Villager (3) • EHR website/ H-GAC website • Email • Media Alert
10/01/05	SOUTH: Angleton Recreation Center, Angleton Attendees:	Envision Houston Region Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle and This Week sections • Other area and minority papers • EHR website/ H-GAC website • Email • Media Alert
10/26/05	EAST: Baytown Community Center, Baytown Attendees:	Envision Houston Region Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle and This Week sections • Other area and minority papers • EHR website/ H-GAC website • Email • Media Alert
10/27/05	WEST: Omni Hotel Westside, Houston Attendees:	Envision Houston Region Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle and This Week sections • Other area and minority papers • EHR website/ H-GAC website • Email • Media Alert
5/04/06	NORTH: Greater Greenspoint Mgmt District, Houston Attendees: 50	Envision Houston Region – Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle North Harris County News (Zone 11) and This Week sections
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHR and H-GAC Web sites
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • El Dia
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Voz
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice of Asia
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African American News
5/06/06	CENTRAL: George R Brown Convention Center, Houston Attendees: 400	Envision Houston Region – Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle This Week sections • Houston Business Journal
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African American News
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Voz
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEP
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • El Dia

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Subasta
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Defender
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Informer
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice of Asia
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHR and H-GAC Web sites
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email
5/11/06	Galveston County, Texas City Attendees: 50	Envision Houston Region – Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Bay Area News (Zone 8) and This Week sections
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle, Pasadena Citizen, Deer Park Progress, Clear Lake Citizen
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eagle Point Express
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galveston County Daily News
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galveston County Observer
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African American News & Issues
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Informer
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice of Asia
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHR and H-GAC Web sites
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email
5/12/06	Fort Bend County, Stafford Attendees: 50	Envision Houston Region – Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Fort Bend (Zone 15) and This Week sections
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fort Bend Sun
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fort Bend Herald
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fort Bend Star
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Defender
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Voz
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Subasta
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • El Dia
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice of Asia
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHR and H-GAC Web sites
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email

Regional Coordination of Public Transportation Services Outreach Initiative

The Houston-Galveston region is home to many persons that do not have access to an automobile or have other mobility limitations. This group includes, but is not limited to, low-income residents, particularly low-income elderly and disabled residents. For these residents, basic transportation service is often provided by social service agencies for clients that meet financial and/or medical eligibility criteria. In other cases, churches and private companies offer limited services. Many parts of the region have limited or no public transportation services. When considering all categories of transportation providers in the region, there are still unmet transit needs.

Transportation stakeholders, health and human services stakeholders, and public transportation advocates convened at H-GAC for the first regional meeting on coordination in September 2005. More than 200 persons attended and expressed a desire to participate in the regional initiative to coordinate services among transportation providers. During the summer of 2006, H-GAC conducted a series of public meetings to solicit comment on the needs of transit-dependent residents in the 13-county H-GAC planning region. The attendees of the public meetings, a total of more than 350 persons, which included members of the general public, transportation providers, business owners, local elected officials, and others were given an open forum in which to express their needs, desires, and ideas regarding public transportation services in their communities. While many

indicated their appreciation of the services that were currently being offered, most agreed that there were further transit services necessary to completely meet their areas' needs. Comments were heard that people desired public transportation to be available on nights and weekends in order to meet the needs of second-shift workers, recreational trips and other purposes. The single item that was expressed at every public meeting was that the general public had a lack of information available to them about the public transportation services that were operating within their communities.

Regional Coordination of Public Transportation Outreach Efforts

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location/ Attendance	Type of Effort / Topic	Ad published / Other Publicity	
7/24/06	Waller County Attendees: 12	RCPT Public Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle News • H-GAC Web site • Email • Area news media • Letters to elected officials in 13 counties 	
7/25/06	Austin County Attendees: 17	RCPT Public Meeting		
7/26/06	Walker County Attendees: 0	Note: No attendees due to inclement weather conditions		
7/26/06	Wharton County Attendees: 20	RCPT Public Meeting		
7/27/06	Colorado County Attendees: 15	RCPT Public Meeting		
7/31/06	Montgomery County (The Woodlands) Attendees: 28	RCPT Public Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle News • H-GAC Web site • Email • Area news media • Letters to elected officials in 13 counties 	
7/31/06	Montgomery County (City of Conroe) Attendees: 25	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/01/06	Harris (City of Pasadena) Attendees: 20	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/01/06	Chambers County Attendees: 11	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/01/06	Chambers (East Harris) Attendees: 29	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/02/06	Fort Bend County Attendees: 20	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/03/06	Galveston County Attendees: 13	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/14/06	Liberty County (North) Attendees: 18	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/14/06	Liberty County (South) Attendees: 20	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/14/06	Matagorda County Attendees: 36	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/15/06	Brazoria County (South) Attendees: 30	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/15/06	Brazoria County (North) Attendees: 11	RCPT Public Meeting		
8/17/06	United Way of Texas Gulf Coast Attendees: 20	RCPT Public Meeting		
11/02/06	Doubletree Hotel, Houston Attendees: 175	Harris County RIDES Program Forum		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Save the Date mail cards • H-GAC website

Work on the regional coordination of transit services is on-going. A steering committee is reviewing the final report on the findings of the public outreach efforts and looking at ways to improve and expand services in the region. More information can be found at www.ridethegulfcoast.com.

2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is a listing of all regionally significant transportation projects proposed over a four-year period for the Houston region. It is a multimodal list of projects that includes highway improvements, transit, rail and bus facilities, high occupancy vehicle lanes, signal synchronization projects, intersection improvements, freeway ramps, etc. The TIP is used to implement the goals and priorities articulated in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). It is developed in compliance with state and federal requirements.

The 2008-2011 TIP contains \$13.7 billion in over one thousand transportation projects to maintain, enhance and expand the regional transportation system. Projects in the 2008 TIP have been identified as priorities for the Houston region and have met initial project development and environmental requirements allowing them to proceed through advanced development and construction within the next four years.

During the development of the 2008-2011 TIP, H-GAC hosted four open house showcases of projects to provide an opportunity for the public to meet with project sponsors (cities, counties, TxDOT, etc.) to discuss local projects in greater detail. Sponsors provided a variety of display boards, maps, and project information to educate the public on area projects. These events were held during the development of the draft TIP as an opportunity to gather public comments on proposed candidate projects. An educational workshop was also held during the development of the 2008 TIP to educate local government representatives on the project submittal and selection process. The workshops provided detailed information on how project sponsors submit projects and how projects are evaluated and ranked.

In addition to public meetings, e-mail, and notices, information on the TIP development process was available on the H-GAC transportation web site. The website included the Draft 2008-2011 TIP documents, as well as information on the TIP Subcommittee meetings, the development timeline, frequently asked questions, project scoring methodology and links to contact H-GAC staff or make public comments. Project submittal information was made available to the public for their review and comment throughout the project selection process.

2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Public

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location / Attendance	Type of Effort / Topic	Ad Published / Other Publicity
11/03/05	Crowne Plaza Hotel Houston NW- Brookhollow Attendees: 250	TIP Project Development Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle This Week sections • Email • News Media • H-GAC Web site • Mailed letters
10/19/06	Southeast: U Houston- Clear Lake Attendees: 45	TIP Project Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle This Week sections • Email • H-GAC Web site • Mailed letters

10/24/06	Northeast: North Harris Montgomery Community College District Campus Attendees: 16	TIP Project Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle This Week sections • Email • H-GAC Web site • Mailed letters
11/01/06	Central: H-GAC Attendees: 59	TIP Project Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle This Week sections • Email • H-GAC Web site • Mailed letters
11/02/06	Southwest: Houston Community College Stafford Campus Attendees: 58	TIP Project Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle This Week sections • Email • H-GAC Web site • Mailed letters
5/15/07	H-GAC Attendees: 50	Combined 2008-2011 TIP and Transportation Public Participation Plan Public Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday and This Week sections • Emails • Letters to Elected Officials • News Media • H-GAC Web site
7/17/07	H-GAC Attendees: 15	2008-2011 TIP Public Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sundays (2) and This Week sections • H-GAC Web site • News Media • Emails to public meeting notices list, TPC, and TAC

Regional Bikeway Plan

The purpose of the Houston-Galveston Area Council's (H-GAC) *Regional Bikeway Plan* is to serve as a guide for investment, interagency coordination and best practices in developing facilities for bicyclists in the 8-county Houston-Galveston Transportation Management Area (TMA).

The Regional Bikeway Plan provides the framework for bicycle and pedestrian recommendations included in the RTP. A summary of the plan is included in Appendix G of the 2035 RTP. The complete document is available on the Publications page at www.H-GAC.com.

As part of the regional transportation planning process, H-GAC solicited public comment on the draft Regional Bikeway Plan prior to inclusion in the draft 2035 RTP. H-GAC worked closely with stakeholder groups to review the draft document and make project recommendations.

Regional Bikeway Plan

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location/Attendance	Group Holding Meeting	Topic
12/13/06	H-GAC Attendees: 40 (avg)	Technical Advisory Committee	Draft Regional Bikeway Plan
12/14/07	Houston Attendees: 12	Harris County Environmental Alliance	Regional Bikeway Plan
12/21/06	Pasadena Attendees: 3	Parks Department	Updates to Regional Bikeway Plan
1/03/07	Conroe/ Montgomery County	Montgomery County	Regional

	Attendees: 6	Engineering Department	Bikeway Plan and shoulders on State roads
2/26/07	Houston Attendees: 8	TxDOT – Houston District	Updates to Draft Regional Bikeway Plan
3/01/02	Liberty/ Liberty County Attendees: 4	TxDOT – Beaumont District	Draft Regional Bikeway Plan and shoulders on State roads
4/2/07	Houston Attendees: 15	Bike Houston	Draft Regional Bikeway Plan
4/3/07	Jersey Village/ Harris County Attendees: 50+	Northwest Cycling Club	Draft Regional Bikeway Plan
4/11/07	H-GAC Attendees: 40 (avg)	Technical Advisory Committee	Draft Regional Bikeway Plan and public comment period
4/18/07	Houston Attendees: 8	City of Houston Pedestrian Bicyclist Advisory Committee	Draft Regional Bikeway Plan

2035 RTP

Using the results of the Envision Houston Region and the Regional Coordination of Transit Services outreach efforts, H-GAC moved into the final phase of outreach activities for the In May 2007 H-GAC’s Transportation Policy Council (TPC) approved the draft 2035 RTP for release for public comment. H-GAC published a notice of the release of the draft document in the Houston Chronicle and posted the document and its appendices on the RTP web site, www.2035plan.org. During June, H-GAC staff conducted five public meetings to discuss the plan recommendations in Baytown, Conroe, Houston, League City and Stafford. In addition, staff participated in a number of meetings at the request of other organizations.

Advertisements for the public meetings were placed in the Houston Chronicle and other local newspapers and magazines. Hispanic, Chinese and Vietnamese translations were placed in a variety of minority oriented publications. Ads were also placed in publications that target African American readers. In addition, notices of the public meetings were mailed and emailed to approximately 7,000 individuals from H-GAC mailing lists.

The website for the 2035 RTP, www.2035plan.org, was used to provide information to the public and to receive and respond to emailed comments. In addition, staff created presentations, summary materials and project lists for the public to review. This information was posted on the website and distributed at public and stakeholder meetings.

In conjunction with the public outreach effort on the 2035 RTP, H-GAC conducted a workshop to provide information on the air quality conformity analysis and process.

2035 Regional Transportation Plan Public Outreach Efforts

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location/ Attendance	Type of Effort / Topic	Ad Published / Other Publicity
6/07/07	NORTH: Montgomery County, Lonestar Convention Center, Conroe	Public Meeting/ Open House – 2035 RTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday and This Week sections • Email

	Attendees: 40		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Media • H-GAC Web site • Letters to Elected Officials
6/12/07	WEST: Fort Bend County, Stafford Centre, Stafford Attendees: 50	Public Meeting/ Open House – 2035 RTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday and This Week sections • Email • News Media • H-GAC Web site • Letters to Elected Officials
6/13/07	SOUTH: Galveston County, Walter Hall Pavilion, League City Attendees: 50	Public Meeting/ Open House – 2035 RTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday and This Week sections • Email • News Media • H-GAC Web site • Letters to Elected Officials
6/14/07	CENTRAL: Harris County, H-GAC, Houston Attendees: 130	Public Meeting/ Open House – 2035 RTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday and This Week sections • Email • News Media • H-GAC Web site • Letters to Elected Officials
6/20/07	EAST: Harris County, Baytown Community Center, Baytown Attendees: 30	Public Meeting/ Open House – 2035 RTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday and This Week sections • Email • News Media • H-GAC Web site • Letters to Elected Officials

2035 RTP Presentations at Non-H-GAC Meetings

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location/Attendance	Group Holding Meeting	Topic
4/25/07	The Gilruth Center, NASA/ JSC, Clear Lake Attendees: 60 (avg)	Bay Area Transportation Partnership	RTP projects and funding
5/14/07	H-GAC Attendees: 3	Houston Wilderness	Projects in RTP and TIP
5/15/07	Galveston Attendees: 6	City and County of Galveston	RTP projects and funding
6/05/07	KRIV-TV station, Houston Attendees: 2	Ch. 39 station manager and news director	2035 RTP
6/06/07	Houston Attendees: 25	North Houston Association	2035 RTP
6/07/07	Katy Attendees: 20	Katy Chamber of Commerce, Transportation Committee	2035 RTP
6/07/07	Houston Attendees: 2	Ch. 26 station manager and news director	2035 RTP
6/11/07	Houston Attendees: 2	Ch.13 station manager and news director	2035 RTP
6/12/07	Angleton Attendees: 16	Brazoria County Commissioners' Court	RTP projects and funding
6/19/07	H-GAC, Houston Attendees: 5	City of Pearland, METRO and Connect Transit	RTP projects and funding
6/20/07	Houston Racquet Club, Houston Attendees: 20	City of Piney Point Village and mayors of the Villages	RTP projects and funding for their area
6/27/07	Humble Civic Center, Humble Attendees: 28	Humble Chamber of Commerce, Transportation Committee	2035 RTP

07/02/07	Houston City Hall Attendees: 2	City of Houston Council Member Pam Holm	2035 RTP
7/03/07	Garden Oaks Elementary School, Houston Attendees: 15	Garden Oaks Civic Club	2035 RTP
07/11/07	H-GAC Attendees: 18	Texas Southern University 2007 National Summer Transportation Institute	2035 RTP and transportation planning
7/17/07	Lakewood Community Center, Houston Attendees: 5	Settegast 49/50 Super Neighborhood	2035 RTP
7/17/07	The Woodlands/ Montgomery County Attendees: 12	The Woodlands Chamber of Commerce	2035 RTP
7/24/07	Jeff Davis High School, Houston Attendees: 26	Greater Northside Management District	2035 RTP
8/01/07	H-GAC Attendees: 4	Galveston County	Regional transit
8/07/07	H-GAC Attendees: 3	Upper Kirby District	METRO Transit Plan
8/14/07	Upper Kirby Building, Houston Attendees: 20	Houston Area TABLE	2035 RTP

2035 RTP Air Quality Conformity Workshop

(Attendance estimates are derived from sign in sheets and exclude H-GAC staff and consultants.)

Date	Location/ Attendance	Type of Effort / Topic	Ad Published / Other Publicity
5/30/07	H-GAC Attendees: 30	Public workshop for transportation-related air quality issues for SIP and RTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston Chronicle Sunday (2) and This Week sections • Emails to Elected Officials and Stakeholders • News Media • H-GAC Web site

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

H-GAC received public comments on a variety of transportation-related issues during the extended 2035 Regional Transportation Plan public comment period, June 1-July 16, 2007. Meeting transcripts, comments received, letters, and H-GAC's responses can be viewed online at www.2035plan.org. H-GAC will continue to post additional comments, correspondence, and responses to the RTP web site, www.2035plan.org, as they are received.

Public Comments Received via Letter, E-mail, Public Meetings, and Other Correspondence

The Houston-Galveston Area Council received many comments on the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. Citizens took advantage of multiple opportunities to participate in the plan development process via H-GAC's web site, in person at public meetings, and mail-back comment card. Comment cards were available at all public meetings. Comments on the 2035 RTP came from private citizens, local governments, agencies, and organizations.

These comments covered a variety of issues from basic assumptions in the plan to specific questions regarding projects listed in the plan. H-GAC reviewed and prepared responses to comments received and forwarded project comments to the appropriate project sponsor.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Comments

The majority of the comments received on the 2035 Regional Bikeway Plan were supportive of the objectives and strategies contained in the plan to encourage bicycling as a safe and efficient travel alternative. H-GAC staff is working on responses to specific bike path projects contained in the comments. In addition to specific comments on the Regional Bikeway Plan, comments were received on biking in general and biking as a component of the 2035 RTP.

Most comments indicated a need for additional facilities and some have expressed concerns regarding specific connectors and shared bikeways. Some of the comments expressed a need for more focus on bike and pedestrian issues in the RTP in terms of additional funding. H-GAC staff will continue to work with the state and local governments to facilitate the growth of bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the region.

Livable Centers Comments

The Livable Centers initiative described in the 2035 RTP is intended to promote transit-oriented development in areas throughout the region. Those commenting on this issue were supportive of the idea, but questioned H-GAC's commitment and level of influence in this area. Some pointed out that the concept seemed to be at odds with the focus in the RTP on the expansion of roadways.

Livable Centers is a concept that is relatively new to the area. The 2035 RTP is the first plan that discussing it directly and the 2008-2011 TIP is the first to identify Livable Centers as a funding program. H-GAC feels that more work is needed in this area and has plans to pursue it further with local governments beginning next year.

Environmental Comments

Many of the comments applauded H-GAC's efforts to explore the issue of environmental impacts in greater depth in the 2035 RTP than in previous plans. Most were disappointed, however, that there was not more discussion of environmental impacts due to transportation investments and concrete solutions to them. H-GAC recognizes that more work needs to be done in the area. It will continue to work with other agencies to develop tools to evaluate environmental impacts and to understand the potential impacts of different transportation investments.

General Comments

Several organizations and individuals took the time to write thoughtful and detailed comments on a variety of elements in the 2035 RTP. Some of the common points were:

- The plan indicates a disproportionate amount of investment in roadways compared to other modes.
- The goals of the plan seem inconsistent with the project listing and are different in the Executive Summary and the main document.
- The assumptions about future growth and development are self-fulfilling and may be incorrect in some areas.
- The plan discusses *Envision Houston Region* but it is not clear how the values identified in that effort are incorporated into the plan.

H-GAC is working to correct the discrepancies between the plan and its Executive Summary. The more difficult task, however, is reviewing the assumptions and the policy decisions implicit in the

plan. H-GAC will continue to discuss scenario planning and the implications of transportation investments on land use outcomes with local governments and the region's policy makers.

Public Outreach Comments

In the public meetings and via email, H-GAC received requests to extend the 30-day public comment period to 60 days. In an effort to accommodate that request, H-GAC extended the public comment period by 15 days, resulting in a 45-day public comment period for the 2035 RTP. There were also requests for additional public meetings. HGAC has offered to give presentations on the plan and provide information to any agency requesting such. H-GAC will also work to streamline the project listing so that it is easier for people to get information on projects.

Managed Lanes Comments

The 2035 RTP includes the addition of managed lanes in many of the region's highway corridors. It also includes the development of several toll roads including SH 99, the Grand Parkway, the completion of BW 8 E, the extension of the Hardy Toll Road into downtown Houston, and the extension of the Fort Bend Parkway into Houston. Some comments expressed opposition to the principle of toll roads. Others were confused about the managed lane concept as a method of ensuring traffic flow improvements.

Because revenue from the state and federal motor fuels tax is not keeping pace with the growth in demand for transportation infrastructure, alternative funding sources must be identified. Tolling is one method of raising revenue needed for system expansion. Without this revenue source, many of the roadway expansion projects described in the plan will not occur. This will result in increased congestion on the region's roadways with resulting negative impacts on the movement of people and goods.

Managed lanes are a traffic management tool rather than a revenue source. They are proposed as bidirectional, two lane facilities in the middle of existing freeways. Transit vehicles, carpools, and vanpools would use the facility for free. Single occupancy vehicles will pay a toll to use the managed lanes. This toll is likely to vary depending on the level of demand on the managed lanes. The advantage to those paying the toll and those in transit vehicles or car/van pools is that the varying toll rate is used to "manage" demand and ensure faster travel for those using the facility.

Transit Comments

H-GAC received numerous comments on the need for additional transit services in the region. There were requests for commuter rail, light rail and fixed route bus services in a variety of locations. Questions were also raised as to why METRO was not considering monorail or elevated rail for commuter service. H-GAC will continue to work with METRO and the region's other transit providers to coordinate transit services in the region and expand service to areas currently underserved.

Specific Projects Comments

H-GAC prepared responses to generally address public concerns on identified projects. Those public comments, as well as H-GAC's prepared responses, are posted at www.2035plan.org.

Public Comment Cards from Area 2035 RTP Meetings

Comment cards were distributed at public meetings to assess the areas of greatest and least concern to citizens. Those making comments identified areas of concern in categories of Most Serious Problems and Other Issues and provided their recommendations for solutions under Most Effective Solutions. Public comments about the 2035 RTP are summarized below:

NORTH: Montgomery County

Most Serious Problems

- Emergency evacuation; transit alternatives; poor roadway conditions; traffic congestion
- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities/access; trucks on highways
- Air quality; emergency evacuation; poor roadway construction
- Transit alternatives; traffic congestion
- Transit alternatives
- Air quality; traffic congestion
- Air quality; environmental impacts; traffic congestion
- Air quality; transit alternatives; traffic congestion; mass rail transit
- Traffic congestion; trucks on highways

Other Issues

- Fix what we have; eliminate small projects
- Plan to meet increased road needs w/o delay; efficient planning
- East/west for Montgomery County
- Construction gridlock for many years
- Integration w/other transp. Plans in other jurisdictions

WEST: Fort Bend County

Most Serious Problems

- Air quality; environmental impacts; transit alternatives; traffic congestion
- Poor roadway conditions; safety on roads/railroad crossings; traffic cong.
- Emergency evacuation; traffic congestion; trucks on highways
- Traffic congestion

Most Effective Solutions

- Expand transit services/commuter rail; livable centers; repair existing roads; smart streets
- More roadways
- Expand transit services/commuter rail; more roadways; smart streets; synchronize signals
- Carpools and teleworking; expand transit services; livable centers; smart streets

SOUTH: Galveston County

Most Serious Problems

- Air quality; emergency evacuation; bicycle and pedestrian facilities/access; transit alternatives
- Air quality; environmental impacts; traffic congestion
- Emergency evacuation; bicycle/ped. facilities/access; safety on road/railroad crossings; traffic congestion

- Air quality; emergency evacuation; transit alternatives; poor roadway conditions
- Environmental impacts/climate change

Most Effective Solutions

- Expand transit services; more bicycle/pedestrian paths
- Carpools and teleworking; expand transit services; livable centers
- Construction schedule improvements; livable centers; more bicycle/ped paths; grade separations
- Expand transit services; repair existing roads; safety improvements
- Expand transit services; livable centers; more bicycle/ped paths; repair existing roads; smart streets

Other Issues

- Need to move commuter rail as soon as possible; allocate more dollars to rail and alternate routes for evacuation
- Lt rail in streets w/vehicular traffic; elevated or monorail; poor safety; shutdown of system when accidents occur
- A fixed route system for the Bay Area
- Please STOP building more roads; make the existing system better and add driving alternatives

CENTRAL: Harris County

Most Serious Problems

- Bicycle/pedestrian paths; transit alternatives; traffic congestion
- Environmental impacts; bicycle/pedestrian facilities
- Transit alternatives; poor roadway conditions
- Environmental impacts; noise
- Air quality; environmental impacts; bicycle/ped facilities; transit alternatives
- Emergency evacuation; traffic congestion
- Bicycle/pedestrian facilities; transit alternatives; traffic congestion
- Environmental impacts; transit alternatives; greenspace; quality of life
- Air quality; emergency evacuation; environmental impacts; traffic congestion
- Air quality; transit alternatives; trucks on highways
- Traffic congestion
- Transit alternatives; traffic congestion

Most Effective Solutions

- All of the above as listed on comment card
- Complete streets for all users, including bikes
- Expand transit services; more roadways; repair existing roads
- Livable centers
- Expand transit services; livable centers; more bicycle/ped paths; repair existing roads; safety improvements
- Carpools and teleworking; more roadways
- Construction schedule improvements; expand transit services; livable centers more bicycle/ped paths; repair existing roads; smart streets
- Expand transit services; livable centers; more roadways
- Expand transit services; more bicycle/ped paths; repair existing roads

- Carpools and teleworking; expand transit services; more bicycle/ped paths; smart streets; synchronize signals
- Expand transit services
- Livable centers; smart streets

Other Issues

- Projects do not match RTP or Envision Houston goals; Grand Parkway is counter to preserving greenspace and reducing driving and pollution
- Great work on IH-10! Westpark tollway sluggish; IH-45 needs repair
- Change wording in RTP (pg 7) to "densification where appropriate, promote development of strategies that preserve/enhance floodplains to preclude slumming."
- Commuter rail is very important to connect suburbs to uptown and downtown
- Managed lanes are a terrible idea; let rich pay for this convenience while the rest of us must wait; transportation should be accessible to everyone!
- Implementation of policy reform and local city level--make them change!
- Please provide more access to public hearing process; extension of public comment period; public hearings in each county
- More transit, less concrete!; expand public comment period, 30 day minimum; have an open house meeting in Waller County next time

EAST: Baytown/ East Harris County and Liberty County

Most Serious Problems

- Transit alternatives; poor roadway conditions
- Emergency evacuation; transit alternatives; traffic congestion
- Air quality; poor roadway conditions; safety on roads/railroad crossings
- Air quality; bicycle/ped facilities; traffic congestion
- Air quality; noise
- Transit alternatives

Most Effective Solutions

- Expand transit service; livable centers; repair existing roads
- Expand transit service; livable centers; more bicycle/ped paths; smart streets
- More bicycle/ped paths; repair existing roads; smart streets
- Expand transit services; more bicycle/ped paths; more roadways
- All the above
- More bicycle/ped paths

Other Issues

- METRO bus transportation to Houston and Galveston
- Evacuation--food and fuel; State administrative depots
- Livable centers in downtown area of Baytown
- Pg. 6 of RTP: Change wording to "densification where appropriate along transit corridors and centers; promote dev. strategies that preserve and enhance flood plains."
- Street flooding
- 60% of budget is to expand roadways, 5% on bike/ped -- more of the same

CONCLUSION

Beginning with the *Envision Houston Region* process, H-GAC relied heavily on public participation and comment in the development of the 2035 RTP. Active public participation during the process provided the framework for the development of the goals and objectives contained in the 2035 RTP. The public played a significant role in the focus areas in plan, including the examination of the relationship between land use and transportation, the development of the regional bikeway plan, and the recommendations for the expansion and enhancement of the regional transit system.

Public comment is essential in identifying issues that are of utmost concern to residents, gauging public opinions as they relate to specific RTP programs, policies and planning activities, as well as exploring public attitudes about matters that directly affect the quality of life in the region. H-GAC will continue to aggressively seek public feedback regarding the issues that must be addressed to improve and sustain the region's quality of life. Working together, the region's citizens and governments can achieve a comprehensive and well-coordinated regional public policy-making and planning process.